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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
First regular session 1997
20-24 January 1997
Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

FOR ACTION

PROGRESS REPORT ON FOLLOW-UP TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS 1995/56 AND 1996/33

Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

SUMMARY

The present report responds to Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/33 of 22 July 1996 on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations which "urges the governing bodies of the relevant agencies to complete their consideration of the follow-up to Council resolution 1995/56 [of 28 July 1995] no later than their first regular sessions of 1997". The report is cross-referenced with the report on "Children and women in emergencies: strategic priorities and operational concerns for UNICEF" (E/ICEF/1997/7), which touches on a number of relevant issues considered in relation to Council resolutions 1995/56 and 1996/33.

This report, as well as comments by delegations and any Board decision, will be transmitted to the Secretary-General for inclusion in his report on this subject to the Council at its substantive session of 1997.

* E/ICEF/1997/2.

INTRODUCTION

1. The indicative agenda of issues for consideration within the framework of Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 of 28 July 1995 (ref. E/1995/L.45, annex) covers three broad sets of concerns which form the basis for the present report:

(a) Agency roles and operational responsibilities with regard to prevention, preparedness, humanitarian response, rehabilitation, recovery and development, as applicable, in both countries of origin and countries of asylum. An agency's role and responsibilities determine its approach to strengthening local capacity and coping mechanisms and govern its allocation of resources between life-saving needs, prevention, preparedness and recovery;

(b) Inter-agency coordination, comprising the practical implications for each agency of full participation in programming coordinated by the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and in related consolidated appeals, and addressing the development of operative memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between organizations. In addition, the Inter-Agency Task Force is examining the issue of a common system to monitor and document humanitarian programmes as one means of contributing to increased accountability of agencies;

(c) Agency-specific internal systems, efficiency and capacities, including the operational and financial capacity to act in a timely and effective manner, administrative and other procedures which provide flexibility and facilitate rapid response, strategies for comprehensive staff development (including inter-agency training models) and the extent of delegation of authority to the field level.

2. Inter-agency follow-up to the Economic and Social Council resolution is being pursued through the Inter-Agency Task Force and its related working groups coordinated by DHA and in which UNICEF participates. In addition, UNICEF is undertaking a number of policy and operational reviews, as part of its own management reform process, which are relevant to the present discussion.

I. UNICEF ROLE AND OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

3. UNICEF is the agency of the United Nations system mandated to advocate and act for children. As a humanitarian actor, its function is to ensure that the needs and rights of the child are always given priority on the humanitarian agenda and are analysed in a systematic and comprehensive manner. No other agency has this specific responsibility. Thus, it complements the mandates of sector-oriented partners such as the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Food Programme (WFP).

4. The foundation for UNICEF action is its long-term country programme approach and its developmental orientation in addressing the determinants of the well-being or vulnerability of children and women in crisis. This long-term perspective allows UNICEF to (a) undertake actions in its regular country programmes that can contribute to the prevention of conflict and humanitarian crisis; (b) participate at country level in preparedness measures as a member of the resident coordinator's Disaster Management Team; and (c) support activities

to promote local capacity-building and rehabilitation - of the individual child, household, community or social service networks - as soon as possible in its humanitarian cooperation. (The emphasis placed on capacity development and rehabilitative action is illustrated in annex II of document E/ICEF/1997/7.) A premium is placed on (a) enabling the family - with particular attention to those households headed by women - to ensure the protection and security of the child; (b) encouraging community management of relief and rehabilitation; and (c) strengthening national government capacity to re-establish and upgrade essential social services.

5. In countries in which UNICEF maintains a presence before, during and after a humanitarian crisis, its activities can provide a bridge between preventive measures, humanitarian relief and rehabilitative activities in the post-crisis recovery phase. It can complement the action of other partners, for example, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which sees its role in countries of origin as one involving relatively short interventions, but which aim to have a lasting impact (see UNHCR document EC/46/SC/CRP.47 of 23 August 1996); WFP, which has a dual mandate of providing both relief and development (see WFP document WFP/EB.3/96/3 of 23 September 1996) and with which UNICEF can collaborate in rehabilitative activities to promote the transition from relief to development; and the United Nations Development Programme in preventive development and in post-crisis capacity-development, rehabilitation and recovery of national social infrastructures.

6. The lack of clear institutional responsibility for meeting the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is the focus of the Inter-Agency Task Force on IDPs, in which UNICEF participates. Currently, UNICEF, like WFP, favours the designation of an operational lead agency on an ad hoc basis in each situation to manage needs assessments, coordinate support and services to IDPs, and lead negotiations with relevant authorities for the protection of and access to IDPs. As stated in document E/ICEF/1997/7, paragraphs 33-35, UNICEF and UNHCR foresee collaboration to develop programme guidelines for internally displaced children and women. UNICEF will systematize the extension of its child care and protection activities to the internally displaced and will ensure operational coordination of actions for IDPs when required and on a case-specific basis.

7. UNICEF is not primarily a relief agency and will provide non-food relief when required as a temporary measure. The development orientation of UNICEF is reflected in the allocation of its resources. In the period 1993-1995, over 73 per cent of its expenditures were allocated to regular country programmes and under 27 per cent to emergency activities. Within emergency expenditures, only a small percentage were allocated to pure non-food relief; over one half were allocated to health, nutrition, water and sanitation to ensure the survival and rehabilitation of vulnerable children and women. Education, to which UNICEF gives early priority in humanitarian emergencies, and community-based action for the protection and rehabilitation of children and women directly exposed to extreme violence were also given considerable emphasis. UNICEF humanitarian programmes are almost entirely funded through supplementary contributions, primarily though consolidated inter-agency appeals (CAPs).

II. INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

8. UNICEF recognizes that no single humanitarian actor alone can respond to the comprehensive needs of children for care and protection; it is committed to partnership in order to achieve this goal. (UNICEF support for comprehensive coordination frameworks is outlined in E/ICEF/1997/7, paragraphs 17-22). UNICEF favours a proactive Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) mechanism. Communication can be more frequent between members of IASC, the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination. In addition to its periodic meetings, UNICEF favours more frequent consultation between principals through telephone conferencing, especially for consideration of urgent matters such as rapid-onset humanitarian crises. UNICEF also supports the role of DHA particularly in strategic coordination at field level. UNICEF also continues to pursue the development of cooperative MOUs with other United Nations agencies as the basis for partnerships based on predictability and clarity of roles.

9. To be effective in its strategic coordination role, DHA needs to give the highest priority to consolidating its capacity for rapid mobilization. To facilitate this, it needs the support of its operational partners and their secondment of competent staff to DHA field operations. UNICEF is committed to strengthening this aspect of its support. Mobilization is also to be facilitated by rapid analysis of information generated through the Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS) and DHA's information exchange with partners. UNICEF anticipates full access to HEWS as part of a process of systematic exchange and analysis of information between the agencies. (The inter-agency linkages of the UNICEF Operations Centre are noted in E/ICEF/1997/7, paragraph 47.)

10. A central component of coordination is the management, analysis and exchange of information. UNICEF would like to see progress towards a DHA-coordinated system of monitoring of humanitarian programmes at field level and is working with the Sub-Working Group on Evaluation and Accountability set up by the Inter-Agency Task Force in this regard. A simple, standardized monitoring tool at field level will (a) facilitate information exchange, transparency and accountability; (b) enable DHA and its partners to issue rapid updates on progress or outstanding needs; and (c) facilitate reporting by agencies on their action and expenditures. UNICEF would also like to see the establishment of common communication systems at field level.

11. Like its main United Nations operational partners, UNICEF considers that the situation on the ground determines, in each complex emergency, the criteria for appointment of the Humanitarian Coordinator and for operational coordination arrangements. UNICEF considers that a strategic coordination role of an efficient DHA, unhampered by operational responsibilities, is generally desirable. In complex emergencies, coordination requires constant information exchange and follow-up between United Nations agencies, national counterparts, and bilateral and non-governmental partners, which can number in the hundreds, as well as with the political and peace-keeping wings of the United Nations. This is a full-time role if it is to be performed well. In each complex emergency, early agreement on the clear designation of operational lead agency roles by geographical zone or programme sector is a necessity, based on recognition of the mandate of each agency and its capacity on the ground.

12. In addition to the development of MOUs with United Nations partners as outlined in E/ICEF/1997/7, paragraph 20, UNICEF has two principal types of agreement with international partners, many of them with international non-governmental organizations. The first is a series of global stand-by agreements with organizations, networks or centres of excellence for the provision of technical expertise in a wide range of fields. Such agreements exist or are under negotiation with the Norwegian Refugee Council, the Disaster Relief Agency (Netherlands), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (United States), the Danish Refugee Council, the Swiss Disaster Relief, the Swedish Rescue Services Board, the Agency for Personnel Service Overseas (Ireland), the Overseas Development Administration (United Kingdom) and the International Executive Service Corps. Externally-available expertise covers such fields as radio communications, vehicle and equipment maintenance, warehousing and logistics, and a range of programme specializations in the fields of health, education, water supply, psycho-social health and trauma recovery, care of the unaccompanied children, child rights, conflict resolution and mediation.

13. Secondly, the organization encourages activity-specific agreements negotiated at country level by UNICEF representatives. For example, in Rwanda, such agreements were drawn up with several agencies, including the Italian NGOs Associazione Volontari Per il Servizio Internazionale and Collegio Universaterio Aspiranti e Medici Missionari, Save the Children Fund (SCF) (United Kingdom) and SCF (United States), for collaboration to help assist unaccompanied children. UNICEF has recently updated its prototype NGO agreement which sets clear parameters in many of the same fields as noted in paragraph 12 above.

14. In line with the priority accorded to capacity development, UNICEF will increasingly pursue partnerships with organizations, professional networks and centres of excellence in regions experiencing complex emergencies to promote intraregional and south-south cooperation in humanitarian action for children.

15. Within the DHA-coordinated Inter-Agency Sub-Working Group on Resource Mobilization, UNICEF supports the initiatives under consideration to streamline the consolidated appeals mechanism, which, including flash appeals, have to be issued in a timely fashion. The recognition by UNICEF of the need to ensure strategic direction and prioritization in CAP documents and, in parallel, to improve its own management of programmes, budgets and reporting to donors, is outlined in paragraph 53 of E/ICEF/1997/7.

III. INTERNAL EFFICIENCIES

16. Chapter IV of E/ICEF/1997/7 provides a comprehensive summary of action under way within UNICEF to strengthen its operational, financial and human resources capacity to act appropriately and effectively, backed by increasingly efficient administrative procedures to facilitate a rapid and flexible response to humanitarian crises.

17. UNICEF is already a highly decentralized organization, with considerable authority delegated to the country representative. None the less, as part of the ongoing organizational reform that foresees the further devolution of responsibilities to the field, UNICEF is reviewing and streamlining decision-making procedures related to the definition of and response to

emergencies in order to clarify lines of authority, accountability and communication between country, regional and headquarters locations (see E/ICEF/1997/7, paragraph 49). Within the inter-agency review process, UNICEF continues to support the principle of maximum delegation of authority and responsibility to field level.

IV. CONCLUSION

18. The present report has emphasized that the child-centred mandate and long-term orientation of UNICEF complements the roles of other partners in humanitarian action. UNICEF will continue to pursue closer cooperation with its United Nations partners and to consolidate MOUs and partnership agreements with organizations and centres of excellence in both southern and northern hemispheres. UNICEF will continue to work with partners in the field and through the IASC Working Group, the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Economic and Social Council and its related working groups to ensure that cooperative humanitarian action is based on complementarity, predictability and clear division of labour.

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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
First regular session 1997
20-24 January 1997
Item 14 of the provisional agenda*

PARTICIPATION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND IN THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND/WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION JOINT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH POLICY

1. At the Executive Board's third regular session of 1996, the Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) informed the Board of a decision taken by the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/UNFPA (decision 96/38) on 13 September 1996 (see annex I). The UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board had reaffirmed the need for close collaboration at all levels among UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) and requested that steps be taken for the UNFPA Executive Board to become a member of the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy (JCHP). The Board also called for UNFPA to participate, as an observer, in the next meeting of JCHP in January 1997.

2. In a letter dated 17 September 1996 (see annex II), Ms. Annette des Iles (Trinidad and Tobago), President of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board, requested the assistance of Mr. Ion Gorita (Romania), President of the UNICEF Executive Board, in bringing the matter to the attention of the UNICEF Board and, in particular, facilitating implementation of decision 96/38. Following a short discussion on this item at the third regular session, in which several delegations expressed the desire to consult with their capitals, the Executive Board agreed to address the issue at the present session.

3. With full recognition of the prerogatives of the two governing bodies, subsequent discussions between the Director-General of WHO and the Executive Director of UNICEF led to agreement on proposed arrangements for submission to the UNICEF and WHO Executive Boards, respectively. These were transmitted to the Executive Director of UNFPA in a joint letter dated 25 October (see annex III).

* E/ICEF/1997/2.

4. On 4 November, the UNFPA Executive Director responded to the joint letter, taking note of the proposed arrangements and undertaking to inform the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board accordingly (see annex IV). On 6 November, the President of the UNICEF Executive Board informed the President of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board of the proposed arrangements to be submitted to the UNICEF and WHO Executive Boards in January 1997 (see annex V).

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

5. The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board adopt the following recommendation:

The Executive Board,

Having reviewed the report "Participation of the Executive Board of the United Nations Population Fund in the United Nations Children's Fund/World Health Organization Joint Committee on Health Policy" (E/ICEF/1997/6),

Requests:

(a) That the agenda of the meeting of JCHP be organized in such a way that matters of direct reference to UNFPA are clustered together. This selective management of the agenda would enable UNFPA to organize the attendance of its Executive Board members and staff in the most economical and effective way that it might choose to adopt;

(b) That the present UNICEF/WHO JCHP be known as the UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO Coordinating Committee on Health and its terms of reference be amended accordingly.

FILE NAME: DECISION 96/38
13 September 1996 5:37pm

Annex I

96/38. Coordination in health policy and programming

The Executive Board

1. Welcomes the oral report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund on coordination in health policy and programming;

2. Reaffirms the need for close collaboration at all levels among the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Population Fund in the area of health policy and programming, including reproductive health, and invites the UNICEF-WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy to ensure that the United Nations Population Fund can participate in the meetings of the Joint Committee on Health Policy;

3. Requests the President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund, with the assistance of the secretariat of the United Nations Population Fund, to ascertain the views of the Executive Boards of the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund on possible membership of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund in the Joint Committee on Health Policy;

4. Requests the President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund to take appropriate action to enable the United Nations Population Fund secretariat to participate as an observer in the Joint Committee on Health Policy in January 1997;

5. Also requests the Executive Director to report to the Executive Board at its second regular session 1997 on the observations made in the Joint Committee on Health Policy and to make further recommendations as appropriate on the action needed for the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and, the United Nations Population Fund to obtain full membership.

13 September 1996

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Annex II

17 September 1996

Dear Mr. President,

I have the honour to write to you in my capacity as President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund with reference to decision 96/38, which was adopted by the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board at its third regular session of 1996. A copy of the decision is attached for your information.

Decision 96/38, inter alia, reaffirms the need for close collaboration at all levels among UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA in the area of health policy and programming, including reproductive health, and invites the UNICEF-WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy to ensure that UNFPA can participate in the meetings of the Joint Committee on Health Policy (para. 2).

The decision requests that I, as President of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board, ascertain the views of the Executive Boards of WHO and UNICEF on possible membership of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board in the Joint Committee on Health Policy (para. 3). It further requests that I take appropriate action to enable the UNFPA secretariat to participate as an observer in the Joint Committee on Health Policy (para.4).

It is through this letter that I seek to carry out the requests contained in decision 96/38. I would therefore very much appreciate your assistance in bringing this decision to the attention of your Executive Board and, in particular, in facilitating the implementation of paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of decision 96/38.

It may be useful in your deliberations to note that the members of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board generally expressed strong support for the Board becoming a member of the Joint Committee on Health Policy.

H.E. M. Ion Gorita,
President, Executive Board of UNICEF,
c/o Permanent Mission of Romania
to the United Nations

c.c. Miss Cecilia Lotse
Secretary of the Executive Board of UNICEF

/...

Annex II (continued)

The Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA stands ready to provide any information and/or support you may need in these endeavours.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Annette des Iles
President
Executive Board of the United Nations
Development Programme and the United
Nations Population Fund

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTE

Annex III

Téléphone Central/Exchange: 791 21 11
Direct: 791 3364

In reply please refer to
Prière de rappeler la: FRH:P13/522/22

Your reference:
Votre reference:

Dr Nafis Sadik
Executive Director
United Nations Population Fund
220 East. 42nd Street
New York. N.Y. 10017
USA

October 1996

Dear Dr Sadik.

We refer to the discussions that took place at the UNFPA Executive Board, in the context of interagency coordination, concerning the participation of the UNFPA Executive Board in the WHO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Health Policy, and as referred to in your letter of 16 September 1996.

We attach great importance to coordination within the United Nations system. In this regard, we fully share the concern that both you, yourself, and the Board members have expressed regarding the need to ensure close collaboration, and coordinated action, between UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO. We look forward to working more closely with UNFPA on issues related to the work of the three agencies.

In recent meetings, we have had an opportunity to review jointly the question of UNFPA membership in the JCHP. In so doing we took full account of the views expressed by the members of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board on 12 September 1996, and the views of the UNICEF Executive Board on 18 September 1996. We also recalled the contents of your letter to us in November 1995.

Recognizing the prerogatives of the Governing Bodies of our organizations, we plan to submit to our respective Executive Boards the following proposed arrangements:

cc: The Director, UNFPA Liaison Office for Europe, Geneva Executive Centre, Palais des Nations, 1211 Genève 10

/...

Dr Nafis Sadik
Executive Director
United Nations Population Fund. New York

FRH-P13/522/22

- The agenda of the meeting of the Committee would be organized in such a way that matters of direct reference to UNFPA were clustered together. This selective management of the agenda would enable UNFPA to organize the attendance of its Board members and staff in the most economical and effective way it might wish to adopt.

- The present UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy would be known as the UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA Coordinating Committee on Health and its terms of reference would be amended accordingly.

The next meeting of the (present) JCHP is scheduled for May 1997. The Executive Boards of all three organizations will meet before that time and, on approval by our respective Boards, the new arrangements could be set in place for the first meeting of the new Committee in May 1997.

We trust that you will find these proposals in line with the expectations of your Board, and of yourself. An early response from you would be appreciated so that matters can be set in motion without delay.

We look forward to fully cooperating with you in pursuit of our common goals.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

Carol Bellamy
Executive Director
UNICEF

Hiroshi Nakajima, M.D., Ph.D.
Director-General
WHO

/...

Annex IV

UNFPA FNUAP
United Nations Population Fund
Fonds des Nations Unies pour la population

220 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10017
Cable: UNFPA New York
Telex: 422031 or 422038
Fax: (212) 297-4911
Telephone: (212) 297-5122

File No : _____

4 November 1996

Dear Ms. Bellamy and Dr. Nakajima,

Thank you for your letter of October 1996, reference FRH: P13/522/22, concerning the Joint Committee on Health Policy.

I am pleased that you agree that coordination at the policy level is important among our three organizations and I am glad that you welcome the proposal for UNFPA Executive Board to become a member of the WHO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Health Policy.

I take note of your suggestions for the proposed arrangements; namely the preparation of the agenda so that matters of direct reference to UNFPA are clustered together, the renaming of the committee as **"UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA Coordinating Committee on Health"** and the amending of its terms of reference accordingly.

I also note that the next meeting of the JCHP is scheduled for May 1997, and that the Executive Boards of our respective organizations will meet before that time. As you have suggested, it is expected that upon approval by our respective Boards, the new arrangements can then be set in place for the first meeting of the new Committee in May 1997.

We will proceed to immediately inform the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board accordingly. We look very much forward to cooperating closely with UNICEF and WHO on this new Coordinating Committee on Health.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Nafis Sadik
Executive Director
and Under-Secretary-General

Ms. Carol Bellamy
Executive Director
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
3 United Nations Plaza, Room H-1380
New York, New York 10017

Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima
Director-General
World Health Organization (WHO)
CH-1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

/...

unicef

United Nations Children's Fund
Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'enfance
Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia

3 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017
212 326-7000
Telex: 175989

Annex V

CF/EB/1996/085
6 November 1996

Dear Mme. President,

I have the pleasure to refer to your letter of 17 October 1996 regarding the participation of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as an active participant at the next regular session in 1997 of the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy (JCHP) and, eventually, full membership on the Committee.

I wish to inform you that the Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA addressed the UNICEF Executive Board on this subject during its third regular session of 16-19 September, 1996. Several delegations expressed the desire to consult with their capitals. In light of the fact that the date of the JCHP meeting had been postponed from January to May of 1997, it was agreed that the issue would be addressed at the first regular session of 1997 (20-24 January).

In the meantime, a letter addressed to the Executive Director of UNFPA under the joint signatures of the Director General of WHO and the Executive Director of UNICEF has been drafted by the two secretariats for approval by the respective Executive Boards of WHO and UNICEF in January 1997.

I remain, dear Mme. President,
Yours sincerely,

Ian Gorita
President
Executive Board of UNICEF

H.E. Mme. Annette des Iles
President
Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme and
the United Nations Population Fund

cc: Ms. Cecilia Lotse
Secretary of the UNICEF Executive Board